

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL
April 11, 2008**

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council was held on Friday, April 11, 2008 at the Pigeon River Country Management Unit Headquarters. Chairman Glasser called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Estes, Bob Bolinger, Ken Glasser, Carol Clute, Pete Gustafson, Eugene Horan, John Walters, Mike Castle, Jim Supina, Arch Reeves, Dave Smethurst, Randy Sanders, and Bob Hess

MEMBERS ABSENT: Don Huff, Rique Campa (excused), Dick Myers, and Mark Ennes. (There is one vacancy.)

EX-OFFICIO PRESENT Brian Mastenbrook, Laurie Marzolo and Tim Cwalinski for Dave Borgeson

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT: Rick Henderson (excused)

OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Brown, Nick Torsky, Hat "Harriet" Oliver, Jude Jarecki, Rick McDonald, Tom Charest, Loretta Cwalinski, Marie Adams, Diane McConnell, Dayle Garlock, Larry Kleinhardt, Judy Kleinhardt, Carol Hyzer, Connie Kleinhardt, R. W. Kropf, Mindy Koch and Joe Jarecki

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS:

Chairman Glasser welcomed new Advisory Council member Mike Estes and asked him to introduce himself.

AGENDA

No changes to the published agenda were requested.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 18, 2008 ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Bolinger, support by Walters to approve the January 18, 2008 minutes as published. **Motion** carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Carol Hyzer said she can live with the proposed horse riding restrictions but wants the 15 dispersed camps left open.

Diane McConnell said she has been coming to the Pigeon River Country State Forest for 25 years and is concerned about closing trails to horse riding and the rule changes. She would like these questions answered:

- Where is the land (17 sections) that will be closed to horses?
- What is the documentation on noxious weeds being spread in horse manure and hay?
- What is the documentation of the bicycle and horse conflict?

She said that horses are quiet recreation and help get kids into the woods.

Larry Kleinhardt said he has camped and ridden near Elk Hill for 25 – 30 years. He saw

problems when Elk Hill was smaller, but they have been fixed. Even with the 15 dispersed camps, he often found no campsites available, so he recently purchased property so he can ride in the PRC. His property is ½ mile from state land, but the new restrictions would require him to ride on roads which, near his property, have too much traffic and are dangerous. He would like to be allowed to ride on state land near his property.

Richard Kropf said he was passing on information from a person who called him. There is not enough information for horse riders that gives them directions about what is expected and horse trails should be marked with a different color than hiking pathways. Smethurst asked Joe Jarecki if a brochure was available that gives horse riders guidance about riding in the PRC. Jarecki said that there is a brochure that is posted in Elk Hill and Johnson's Crossing campgrounds and is also available as a handout at the PRC office/visitor center.

RECREATION WORKGROUP REPORT

Resource Management Deputy Director Mindy Koch introduced herself and answered the questions that were raised during public comments. The 17 section riding restriction was put in place a long time ago but was never enforced. Koch said that folks who work here told her that invasive/non native weeds appear to have been introduced in horse manure and hay. She said marking horse trails with a different color than pathways should be done.

Federal government restrictions are not part of the 17 section riding restriction. Because state fish and game funds purchased much of the Pigeon River Country State Forest, the federal government is concerned about horse and bicycle use on those lands when federal fish and game money is used on them. However, the key issue is that when the Concept of Management was adopted in 1973, the DNR decided to manage the Pigeon River Country differently than other state forest lands. The PRC is unique and is managed to emphasize its wild characteristics.

Koch said the recently updated Concept of Management has resulted in the need for several additional Land Use Orders of the Director, including:

- Restricting snowmobiles in December, 2007.
- Opened the seven sinkhole lakes to fishing. They had been previously closed to fishing for research.
- Submitted for information an Order related to bicycle and horse use.
- A group to update vehicular access that will include all state land in the PRC boundary may be formed.

A Recreation Workgroup was formed to advise the Department whether or not the sections about bicycles and horses in the recently updated Concept should be modified. Workgroup members included representatives from bicycle, horse and hunting user groups; from the PRC Advisory Council; from the PRC Association; and from DNR staff who work in the PRC. The Group Facilitator was MSU Professor Charles Nelson. The Workgroup met twice and did not make a consensus recommendation, but a report of the meetings was produced. (Copy attached.) Consensus was close about bicycle use but there is tremendous passion about equestrian use and there was no middle ground.

A draft Director's Order about bicycle and equestrian use was submitted for information only to the Natural Resources Commission at its April meeting. The expectation is that an Order will be finalized by the Director at the May NRC meeting. The restrictions in the Concept were

expanded to include opening the Pickerel Lake and Shingle Mill pathways to bicycles as well as the High Country Pathway. Bicycles would not be allowed to ride on Management Roads (roads closed to motor vehicles) or cross country/through the woods.

The equestrian restrictions in the Concept will be implemented if the informational/draft Director's Order is approved except that two small segments of Management Roads will be open so horse riders can make two loop rides and avoid heavily traveled roads.

Koch was asked if horse groups could operate the closed campgrounds on the North Spur (Johnson's Crossing campground in the PRC) if budget money is not available for the DNR to operate them. She said she is optimistic that the supplemental appropriation will pass so the campgrounds can be opened. If funding is not available, it might be possible for horse groups to operate the campgrounds and discussions about that possibility can take place.

Advisory Council members strongly advocated that the Advisory Council be the public input avenue for the update of the Vehicle Access Plan instead of a special work group. Koch said the Advisory Council is the only body that the Director responds to every recommendation. She understands that the Advisory Council wants to be and should be part of the Vehicle Access Plan update process.

Resolution by Smethurst, support by Walters that:

WHEREAS, the Pigeon River Country State Forest Advisory Council is charged with making recommendations to the Director of the Department of Natural Resources concerning policies in the PRCSF; and

WHEREAS, the Advisory Council is charged with gathering support for policies of the Department regarding the PRCSF; and

WHEREAS, changes to the Concept of Management Steering Committee's recommendations concerning bicycles and equestrian use in the PRC were made without Advisory Council review or input; and

WHEREAS, some believe the proposed equestrian rules will result in increased negative impacts on the resource and increase user conflicts; and

WHEREAS, those changes have created considerable interest and concerns from impacted user groups; and

WHEREAS, the Recreation Work Group created by the Director to address some of these issues did not issue any definitive recommendations; and

WHEREAS, one thought of the Work Group was to create a "moratorium" on changes in the equestrian use portion of the rule changes;

THEREFORE, the Advisory Council recommends that any changes in equestrian use rules be postponed for one year, and by the fall of 2008, the Advisory Council will convene meetings to address the issues, impacts, potential solutions and make a comprehensive proposal on long term solutions on this issue to the Department in time to implement any suggested changes prior to the 2009 summer season.

After discussion, **Motion to amend** by Walters, support by Bolinger to remove the third WHEREAS paragraph. **Motion to amend** carried.

After further discussion, **Motion to amend** by Estes, support by Walters to restate the last two WHEREAS paragraphs. During discussion of this amendment, Smethurst and Walters agreed to withdraw the last two WHEREAS paragraphs and Estes and Walters withdrew the amended **Motion to amend**.

The **Amended main Resolution** is:

WHEREAS, the pigeon River Country State Forest Advisory Council is charged with making recommendations to the Director of the Department of Natural Resources concerning policies in the PRCSF; and

WHEREAS, the Advisory Council is charged with gathering support for policies of the Department regarding the PRCSF; and

WHEREAS, some believe the proposed equestrian rules will result in increased negative impacts on the resource and increase user conflicts; and

WHEREAS, those changes have created considerable interest and concerns from impacted user groups;

THEREFORE, the Advisory Council recommends that any changes in equestrian use rules be postponed for one year, and by the fall of 2008, the Advisory Council will convene meetings to address the issues, impacts, potential solutions and make a comprehensive proposal on long term solutions on this issue to the Department in time to implement any suggested changes prior to the 2009 summer season. **Resolution** defeated by a majority of no votes.

Motion by Gustafson, support by Smethurst that the Advisory Council supports the recommendations of the DNR as written regarding bicycles and equestrian use. **Motion** carried with one no.

Motion by Smethurst, support by Supina that the PRC Advisory Council requests that the DNR prepare reports identifying actual threats or damage to the resource or reports of user conflicts as of January 1, 2008 to create a baseline for equestrian and bicycle use. We note these reports may be largely anecdotal, but encourage the use of data when possible. We also encourage the creation of a data collection system for future decision making. **Motion** carried with one no.

VEHICLE ACCESS MAP REPORT

Laurie Marzolo said they are working on a G.I.S. map of the Pigeon River Country State Forest so that a variety of map products can easily be produced. She passed out drafts of the Vehicle Access map and of the Recreation Trails map. She said Rick McDonald, PRC Forest Technician, has been taking the lead on developing the map.

McDonald said he has been working with the Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division Lansing Map Shop on the project. He described the process and discussed some of the map features that are included. Advisory Council members were invited to contact the PRC office

with comments and/or corrections.

BREAK 8:21 to 8:45 p.m.

OIL AND GAS COMMITTEE REPORT

Mike Brown passed out the minutes from the March 26, 2008 Oil & Gas Committee meeting. (Copy attached.) Advisory Council members read the report which was then discussed by Brown.

Brown said Rick Henderson, DEQ District Geologist and Ex-officio Advisory Council member, called to say he is sick and unable to attend. Brown reported that Henderson said he checked and secondary recovery is not allowed in the Consent Order boundary of the PRC. If there was an application to do carbon sequestration or carbon dioxide enhanced recovery in the Consent Order area of the PRCSF, it would be denied.

Smethurst suggested that the Advisory Council look into carbon dioxide enhanced recovery because it appears it might be possible to get more total oil out and to do it more quickly. If that is correct, there would be a double benefit of additional money in the Trust Fund and getting oil wells out of the PRC sooner. Randy Sanders said new pipelines and infrastructure would be needed to bring the carbon dioxide into the PRC. Also, new injection wells may need to be drilled. Chairman Glasser referred the issue of looking into carbon dioxide enhanced recovery to the Oil & Gas Committee.

Motion by Reeves, support by Horan that the Advisory Council recommends that no carbon sequestration or carbon dioxide enhanced recovery projects be allowed inside the boundaries of the Pigeon River Country State Forest, should they be proposed.

After discussion, **Motion to amend** by Smethurst, support by Reeves to add the words "injection wells" after carbon sequestration. **Motion** carried with one no.

Motion to amend by Smethurst, support by Hess to strike the words "carbon dioxide enhanced recovery". **Motion** defeated by a majority of no votes.

After further discussion, **Motion to amend** by Walters, support by Estes to add the words "no further" in front of "carbon dioxide enhanced recovery" and the words "as defined in the Concept of Management" after "Pigeon River Country State Forest". **Motion** carried.

The **Amended main Motion** is:

Motion by Reeves, support by Horan that the Advisory Council recommends that no carbon sequestration injection wells or no further carbon dioxide enhanced recovery projects be allowed inside the boundaries of the Pigeon River Country State Forest as defined in the Concept of Management, should they be proposed. **Motion** carried with one no.

SINKHOLE LAKES PLAN AND BLACK RIVER TROUT FISHING REGULATIONS REPORT

Fisheries Biologist Tim Cwalinski gave a Power Point presentation about implementation of the plan to open the Sinkhole Lakes to trout fishing and about the brook trout special regulation study on the Black River between Tin Shanty Bridge Road and the steps near Town Corner

Lake Campground. If the study on the Black River shows that special regulations are not effective for increasing the number of large brook trout, the old regulations will be reinstated.

Other issues/projects Cwalinski discussed were: summer water temperature monitoring, large woody debris enhancement and culvert replacements on the upper Black River; working with the DEQ to build ground water removal regime impact information for streams throughout the state (stream temperatures above 68 degrees have a big drop in the number of trout per acre); Milligan Creek watershed plans; possibly removing the dam on the property that was purchased on Chandler Dam Road; and culvert replacements on Hodge and Little McMasters creeks.

DNR FOREST, MINERAL & FIRE MANAGEMENT DIVISION REPORT

Eastern Lower Peninsula District Supervisor Dayle Garlock said that the replacement for Bud Slingerland should be approved soon. If the ½ million dollar special appropriation is approved, all campgrounds that were closed last year should be able to be opened. If it does not pass, there will be 50 more campgrounds closed.

Garlock was asked when the vacant PRC Unit Manager position will be filled. He said he was hopeful it will be filled by September, but that will depend on budgets.

Resolution by Smethurst, support by Supina that:

WHEREAS, the Pigeon River Country State Forest has been without a permanent Unit Manager for a year; and

WHEREAS, the PRCSF is a “special” state forest in the State of Michigan; and

WHEREAS, the PRCSF has a unique Concept of Management; and

WHEREAS, the PRCSF has a complex and unique hydrocarbon development plan and the Unit Manager has always been the Enforcement Officer; and

WHEREAS, the PRC Advisory Council understands the budget limitations of the DNR; and

WHEREAS, leadership on a permanent basis is critical for the PRCSF;

THEREFORE, the PRC Advisory Council asks the Department to fill the Unit Manager position and to “transfer” the vacancy to another office immediately. **Motion** carried.

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS

Wildlife Division

Brian Mastenbrook said that his supervisor, Glen Matthews, retired at the end of March. Tim Reis transferred to the position from Bay City.

The elk survey was completed. The population estimate is 1180 animals +/- 15%. The recommendation this year is to increase the hunt quota to 330. There will be an early and a December season with the option of a January season if needed. It will take two years to get down to the Elk Management Plan population goal. The hunt will be designed to continue to increase pressure on animals on the fringe of the elk range.

FMFM Division

Laurie Marzolo passed out and discussed her written report. (Copy attached.) Garlock emphasized that participating in the Open House (July 29th this year) is the best annual opportunity to discuss plans for the Year of Entry compartments in detail with foresters and biologists. Council members requested that there be the equivalent of an Open House at the July 25th Advisory Council meeting.

A suggestion was made that the PRC Association consider funding a study by MSU Professor Chuck Nelson to better understand the impacts of horse and bicycle use.

After hearing that Aurora has withdrawn their request to drill for Antrim Gas in Blue Lakes, **Motion** by Smethurst, support by Walters that the Advisory Council recommends to Director Humphries that acquisition of the mineral rights in Blue Lakes be investigated. **Motion** carried.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

A status report on the removal of the buildings at the former Kronlund and MCCC Camp Vanderbilt locations was requested.

The plaque and resolution for Bud Slingerlend will be on the July agenda if Bud can come in July.

The resolution recognizing Pete Gustafson's tenure as Advisory Council Chair will be on the July agenda.

OTHER BUSINESS

A draft resolution about Bud Slingerlend was passed out. (Copy attached.)

Motion by Walters, support by Bolinger to approve the draft resolution in honor of Bud Slingerlend. **Motion** carried.

Walters reported that the Headwaters Chapter of Trout Unlimited will have spotters at each Sinkhole Lake on opening weekend of Trout Season.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Glasser at 10:30 p.m.

Minutes were taken and summarized by Joe Jarecki.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laurie Marzolo, Secretary